तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनम्
tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

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"In my Absence"

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The spiritual master is present wherever his sincere disciple is trying to serve his instructions. This is possible by the mercy of Krishna. In your attempts to serve me and in all your sincere devotional sentiments I am with you as my Guru Maharaja is with me. Remember this always. (Letter to Bhakta Don, 1 December 1973)

So now I am depending on you all to carry on this great mission in my absence; chant and hear, and Krishna will bless you. (Letter to "Children at New York", 26 July 1967)

Please always try to remember me by my teachings and we shall always be together. Just like I have written in the first publications of *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, "The spiritual master lives forever by his divine instruction and the disciple lives with him,'' because I have always served my Guru Maharaja and followed his teachings I am even now never separated from him. Sometimes *māyā* may come and try to interfere, but we must not falter. We must always follow the path laid down by the great *ācāryas*, and in the end you will see. (Letter to Cidananda, 25 November 1973)

If you think of me and work for me, then I am in your heart. If you love somebody he is in your heart. It is a common thing. Everyone understands it.(Letter to Jadurani, 4 September 1972)

Unauthorized Instructors

Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode

Bhaktivinoda-vāṇī-vaibhava *is a collection of the teachings of Srila Thakur Bhaktivinode compiled by Sri Sundarananda Vidyavinode, a prominent disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, and published in 1938. The book is in the form of a series of questions composed by the compiler, with answers extracted from Thakur Bhaktivinode's teachings. The following are some extracts from chapter 6.*

What is the behavior and opinion of learned godless instructors of fruitive activities?

They will say to themselves:

"O my brother, don't stay away from sense pleasures. Enjoy sense pleasures as you like,

next column ☞

as long as others do not know of them. Why not? I do not think the world will collapse because of them. There is no God, an all-seeing God who gives to us the results of our actions. What have you to fear? Just be a little careful, so no one will know. If they learn of it, then you will lose your good reputation, and perhaps the government or bad people will make trouble for you. If that happens, neither you nor others will be happy."

Know for certain that if the hearts of the preachers of atheistic morality were examined, these thoughts would be found. (*Tattva-viveka* 1.9-12 commentary)

Is it proper for a bona fide spiritual master to give *hari-nāma* or *mantra* initiation to a faithless person?

One who gives *hari-nāma* to a faithless person with a desire to receive some *dakṣiṇā* is a seller or trader of *hari-nāma.* By exchanging an invaluable jewel for an insignificant object, a person falls down from the spiritual life of worshiping Hari. (*Caitanya-śikṣāmṛta*)

Can an imposter become a spiritual master?

O my mind! Your definition of a saintly person is he who is expert in juggling words, and you become fully influenced by his association. If you see a cruel person, you show respect to him and fall down at his feet with devotion. (*Kalyāṇa-kalpataru* song 16)

Can a *sannyāsī* who has given up the shelter of his spiritual master become an *ācārya*?

Even though Ramachandra Puri was a disciple of Madhavendra Puri, he accepted polluted conclusions from the society of dry speculators and preached irreligious principles. As a result, Madhavendra Puri Goswami rejected him and considered him an offender. Then, Ramachandra Puri blasphemed and found fault with others. He gave instructions on dry knowledge and thus became neglected by the *vaiṣṇavas*. (*Amṛta-pravāha-bhāṣya commentary on Cc. antya,* chapter 8)

Are the conclusions of a bona fide *ācārya* and an unauthorized *ācārya* the same?

After carefully discussing the *Vedas* and the *Vedānta-sūtras,* the *ācāryas* have drawn two kinds of conclusions. Srimat Sankaracharya preached the philosophy of monism based on the conclusions put forth by the sages like Dattatreya, Ashtavakra, and Durvasa. This is one kind of conclusion. The *vaiṣṇava ācāryas* preach the science of pure devotional service based on the conclusion put forth by the great souls like Narada, Prahlad, Dhruva, and Manu. This is the other kind of conclusion. (*Śrī Manaḥ-śikṣā*, Chapter 9)

— *Śrī Bhaktivinoda Vāṇī Vaibhava*. Translated by Sri Bhumipati Das, Published by Sri Iswara Das and Touchstone Media. Vrindavan. 2002.

Sadhu-sanga and Krishna-nama

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Sri Gaurasundara teaches the all-sufficiency of the *kīrtana* of the name of Krishna. The ritual is the simplest possible. The only condition is that the name has to be chanted in the company of a saint. If there is no saint there is no name, as the name only makes his appearance on the lips of his bona-fide devotees."

— *Harmonist,* January 1932

"If Krishna is Satisfied"

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Part One

Once the various parts of the body got together and complained about the stomach: "We are always serving him, but he is just sitting idly and eating. From today we will stop supplying food to the stomach." In other words, they stopped cooperation with the stomach. What happened? If one stops giving food to the stomach, can they be active? Can they walk? No, they will become weaker and weaker and weaker. And that happened. Day after day the legs become weak, the hands become weak, all of the limbs of the body became weak. They couldn't work. The hands couldn't work, the legs couldn't move, the ears couldn't hear well, the eye couldn't see well. Then they could understand, "Oh, we had a misconception. Although apparently the stomach seems to be always sitting idly, not doing anything, he is actually doing a great deal of work. He supplies strength to us. So we should cooperate with the stomach." By practical experience they learned this lesson. This is a question of cooperation.

Similarly, the Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna is the source of everything

— *ahaṁ sarvasya prabhavaḥ* [*Bg*. 10.8]. He says, "I am the only enjoyer, the master of all sacrifice." If you can give pleasure to Krishna then automatically everyone will get pleasure. If Krishna is satisfied then automatically everyone will be satisfied, because Krishna is the root of the tree. *Bhāgavatam* (4.31.14) says:

> *yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena*
> *tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ*
> *prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇāṁ*
> *tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

As pouring water on the root of a tree energizes the trunk, branches, twigs and everything else, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshiping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods, who are parts of that Supreme Personality.

If the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead Krishna or Vishnu is worshiped and satisfied, then automatically everyone will be worshiped and everyone will be satisfied. We find that when we try to satisfy one and all we fail. Even though we try our best, we cannot satisfy them. A householder tries his best to satisfy his wife, children, and family members, but still he is not successful. There is always dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction. Those who are *gṛhasthas* know this. They have practical experience. It is a very difficult matter to satisfy a woman. Even if you make a golden cage or a golden garment for her, still by nature she will not be satisfied.

The *Mahābhārata* tells a story about the five Pandava brothers, Yudhisthir, Bhima, Nakul, Arjun, Sahadev, and their wife Draupadi. They were banished to live in the forest for twelve years. Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritarastra, was very crooked. He was always trying to finish the Pandavas. Once Duryodhan invited Durvasa Muni to his home. Durvasa was always in an angry mood. If there was a little discrepancy in any way he would get angry and curse the offender. By his curse that person would be burnt to ashes. Duryodhana fed Durvasa with nice *prasāda*. Duryodhan then requested him, "Rishi, will you do one thing for me."

Having received the nice food, Durvasa was satisfied with Duryodhan. So he said, "Yes, what do you want?"

"The Pandavas are living in the forest. Please go there with your thousands of disciples. But you should go in the afternoon. Don't go before then."

"All right, I will do as you ask." Durvasa said.

The plan behind it was that if Durvasa Muni went there in the afternoon with his thousands of disciples, and the Pandavas were not able to give him any food, then Durvasa would become angry, curse them, and they would be finished.

The Pandavas were living in the forest. For eating they were just collecting some fruits, roots, and leaves from the forest. Draupadi would cook every day. First she would serve her husbands, and if any guest came she also served them. Finally, only after serving everyone, Draupadi would take her food. Draupadi would then clean the cooking pots and put them aside. If any guest came after that, Draupadi would not be able to give them *prasāda*. As long as Draupadi had not taken her food, even if thousands of guests came she would be able to feed them. She had the power that her cooking pot would never be empty. It would always be full. She was also known as "Annapurna-devi", because her pot was always full of *anna*, food. However, after Draupadi took her meal then that pot would be emptied and she would not be able to feed any guest who came.

Duryodhan told Durvasa, "Please go there in the afternoon." That way Draupadi would have already taken her food so she would not be able to offer Durvasa and his disciples anything. Durvasa would get angry and curse them and the Pandavas would be finished.

Durvasa arrived in the afternoon with his thousands of disciples. Yudhisthir Maharaja is known as Dharmaraja — he very strictly follows the principles of dharma. He is a very nice gentleman and never speaks a lie. According to etiquette, if a guest comes a *gṛhastha* must give him food and take nice care of him. That is *gṛhastha-dharma*. So when Durvasa Muni arrived there with his thousands of disciples, out of etiquette Yudhisthir said, "Please go and take your bath. Come soon and we will serve you food." Durvasa Muni went to the nearby stream with his thousands of followers and they began taking bath. Yudhisthir called out, "Draupadi, bring food!" In this way a problem arose for Draupadi — she could not

give any food because she had already taken her meal. Draupadi thought, "Now I am in great danger. How can I serve the guests? I cannot give any food now. Who will help me in this situation? Only Krishna can help me; no one else is there." So she prayed piteously to Krishna to help. Krishna is everywhere, and he heard her prayer. If your prayer is sincere then Krishna can hear. Krishna was in Dwarka and he could hear Draupadi's prayers.

Krishna ran breathlessly to where the Pandavas were, and from a distance started calling, "Draupadi! Draupadi! Draupadi! I am very hungry! Give me some food!"

When Krishna came nearer, Draupadi said, "Please listen to me. . . ."

"I won't listen to anything. Please give me some food first, then I will listen."

Draupadi had no food to give. She said, "I have this problem, Krishna. I have no food."

"No, no, no. There must be something for me. Go and see, there must be some food." But Draupadi had already cleaned the cooking pots.

That day Draupadi had cooked some leafy vegetables. She found one leaf stuck to the brim of the pot. Draupadi brought that cooking pot, and Krishna said, "Oh, yes! Food is here." He took that one leaf, ate it, and drank a glass of water. He became very satisfied, and said, "Draupadi, you gave me so much to eat. I am feeling drowsy. I must sleep now."

Meanwhile, Durvasa Muni and his thousands of disciples were taking bath in the stream. Some of the disciples told Durvasa, "O Guru Maharaja! It is very wonderful that our belly has suddenly become so heavy that we cannot lift ourselves from the water."

Durvasa said, "That is also the case with me." Durvasa Muni then thought, "Oh! The Pandavas are *vaiṣṇavas*." He remembered the incident that had previously taken place with Ambarish Maharaja and how the *sudarśana-cakra* came running after him. He thought, "Let us run away! Let's not go there."

Yudhisthir Maharaja thought, "Where are the guests? The sun is going to set. If I don't entertain my guests before sunset then I will be an offender." He said, "Sahadeva, go and see where the guests are." Sahadeva went and saw that they were all running away.

In this way, Durvasa Muni and his thousands of followers were all satisfied because Krishna took only one leaf and was satisfied. This is *ahaṁ hi sarva-yajñānāṁ bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca* — Krishna is the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices (*Bg.* 9.24). If someone satisfies Krishna, then automatically he will satisfy one and all.

(To be concluded in the next issue)

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CONCENTRATED LISTENING

Nārada Purāṇa *1.1. 73-74*

naro yaḥ sat-kathā-madhye saṁbhāvāṁ kurute 'nyataḥ
sa yāti narakaṁ ghoraṁ tad ekāgra-manā bhavet

śrotā vaktā ca viprendrā eṣa dharmaḥ sanātanaḥ
asamāhita-cittas tu na jānāti hi kiñcana

One who carries on a conversation with others during a holy discourse about the Lord goes to a terrible hell. Hence, O leading *brāhmaṇas*, the speaker and the listener should both pay single-minded attention. This is the eternal path of righteousness. Without concentrating the mind one cannot understand anything.

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